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**Beverly Mills**  
Director

### **LITERACY COMMITTEE**

**April 16, 2014– 8:45 a.m. –10:00 a.m.**  
**Mercer County Community College – Trenton Campus**

**Present:** Monica Weaver (MCCC), Gay Egan (Mercer Street Friends), Lynne Wise (Home Front), Peg Gould (MCCC), Paula Rossi (Princeton Y), Jane Kleindienst (Lutheran Social Ministries), Scott Bollwage (MCCC), Pat Shump (LWD), Ida Malloy (Rescue Mission), Nancy Thomson (Childcare Connection), Joe Entwistle (MCCC Financial Consultant for ABS Grant)

**Staff:** Beverly Mills

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Monica Weaver, MCCC Provost and Co-Chair of the WIB Literacy Committee, opened the meeting.

#### **Review and Approval of January 15, 2014 Minutes:**

Due to the weather, the Literacy Committee did not meet as scheduled in February. No meeting was held in March in lieu of the Professional Development Day which took place on March 8th. The minutes from the last Literacy meeting, which was held on January 15, 2014, were reviewed. A motion was made by Gay Egan to approve the minutes; was seconded by Lynne Wise with one abstention from Nancy Thomson. The approved minutes will be placed on the county website.

#### **Consortium Update as of April 16, 2014:**

Peg Gould updated on behalf of the Consortium. She reported there is progress with TASC testing and administrators have met and are arranging with IT and the Bursar to be prepared by May 10<sup>th</sup> or 17<sup>th</sup> to test. This will be a closed test and not open to the public at this time, this will give IT a chance to work out any last minute kinks. MCCC plans to test two Saturdays every month. If an individual is starting to test from the beginning they will have to take all five tests and pay \$92.00. MCCC no longer has the capacity or manpower to test every day. Peg said a new information sheet should be out by the end of the month.

Ida asked if MCCC has the capacity to accommodate someone with a learning disability. Peg answered normally this kind of request would have to be submitted to the vendor first. Ida explained it's a request for

extended time for the individual to test in an area free from distraction. Peg said MCCC would be able to accommodate this person. At this time MCCC is waiting for the NGO to come out.

### **March 8, 2014 Professional Development Day:**

Peg reported that Larry Breeden from the Department of Education presented with good information about the 2014 high school equivalency tests in New Jersey. Other presenters were from the Passaic County Consortium who shared best practices on how they are able to meet five out of six ESL benchmarks. The last presenter, Jonice Arthur, discussed Common Core Standards.

Gay mentioned that Hamilton is planning to do paper and pencil testing in May but scores will not be available for 6-8 weeks. Peg said the turn-around for computer tests are only 2-3 days.

Lynne Wise discussed taking a student to Fort Dix to take the test; it will cost \$120.00. Unfortunately the One Stop cannot cover this cost; it can only pay for testing at MCCC or Hamilton because of the TANF contract.

Peg said she will speak with Kendra about testing funding and the upcoming TANF contract. MCCC cannot accommodate paying per section. For initial TASC test takers you have to pay for all five sections up front which is \$92.00. Also, initial testers must take all five sections within a two week time frame.

Gay mentioned there will be a 2-3 year time lag until the State will have a system in place for scores. Peg said that since MCCC is a testing site, it will have access to scores. Customers will have to request MCCC to release the scores to them however they may be able to go on line to access them as they do with the TABE. NRS records are no longer accessible to retrieve previous GED scores.

Ida agreed with Lynne about being fearful of losing students who are ready to take to the test and not being able because of backlog, etc. Peg mentioned other testing sites, such as Brookdale College, that have been up and running.

Monica mentioned the Youth Core Program has money in the budget to pay for testing fees but will have to do a budget modification next year to increase.

Monica suggested that the Literacy Committee bring these concerns to Larry Breeden's attention or at the Examiner's Conference. Committee agreed that Larry should be asked to a Literacy meeting; about how the ripple effect of this new high school equivalency will negatively impact the lives of so many.

Monica further agreed saying MCCC didn't have time to troubleshoot or plan accordingly when the State made their decision.

### **NGO Needs Assessment:**

The next NGO may have a longer funding cycle (2-3 years). The framework for the needs assessment will come from what was discussed at the Professional Development Day. The Consortium will brainstorm at their meeting directly following. Other agencies that may benefit from being part of the Consortium include: El Centro Legal Defense, Rescue Mission, Mercer County Detention Center, TASK and Mercer County Drug Court.

### **LWD Workforce Development Letter (Literacy response?):**

In response LWD Deputy Commissioner Aaron Fichner's letter requesting input from partners about the workforce development delivery system, Gay reminded that the first step is to achieve a high school diploma or an equivalency. It is the goal of adult literacy educators to get students to MCCC or the MCTS but cannot do so without students getting their diplomas. It's the reality of the adult educator to first build the foundation.

Monica agreed saying that more money is needed to offset higher testing fees; Peg said the NGO should perhaps include transitioning and workforce preparedness. Monica added the benchmarks, though set by the Feds, are unrealistic. Employers should also take more of an interest in later GED students through internships or apprenticeships. She cited the example of the Pharmacy Technician Apprenticeship Program and the 2007 EYES Youth Program through the WIB.

Jane concurred saying there needs to be more imagination on the part of businesses and that they also have to share the vision. Lynne asked if it was possible to model an OJT/High School Equivalency blend. Committee liked the suggestion and discussed a few local companies, such as TRANE, as possible partners.

### **Announcements:**

Monica mentioned the high school equivalency graduation on May 6, 2014, 6:00 PM at the War Memorial. Pamela Pruitt will be the keynote speaker.

Meeting adjourned; next WIB literacy meetings, **May 21st and June 18th, 2014 (8:45 AM)** MCCC Trenton Campus. Please note these are our two remaining literacy meetings until we break in July and August!